Around the World and Back Again

Tokio With Lights Low

JAPANESE cities are best seen at night. Darkness hides the occasional piles of rubbish, the occasional pools of slops, the cracking paint and other items of drabness which the sun discloses. Darkness also lends color to the galaxy of swaying lanterns of many shapes and many colors, and completes that illusion of dainty mystery which narrow winding streets and close-packed tiny paper houses always suggest. Tokio at night is the most alluring city I have ever seen. By day it cannot compare for charm and romance with Moscow, Peking or Mexico City, but after sunset the capital of the Japanese surpasses these as much as they surpass it after sunrise. In Tokio at night you will find all the Oriental glamour you have ever found in books or dreams. I turned into a side street off the Ginza near where a signboard announced

SALOON AND BAR

ICECREAM AND MILK

It is in such liliputian streets that the main spell of Tokio is found. The streets of the Bagdad of Scheherezade offered no more nocturnal adventures.

Going about his rounds tooting upon a shrill whistle, a blind masseur crashed into me as he turned a corner "Baka" (Fool), he snarled, and his curses gave me that creepy feeling that the sight of impudence in a cripple sometimes arouses.

The street resounded with the strumming of samisen, the booming of tsuzumi (drums shaped like hour glasses) and the ribald caterwauling of honorable guests well along in intoxication. Before nearly every house stood one or two limousines, the drivers waiting patiently till the wealthy and distinguished owners of the cars who were making the night hideous with their yowling from behind the shoji should have had their fill of dissipation.

Exactly where I wandered that night I never learned. A Japanese city is like a maze, and so small are the houses and the pathways leading to them that you can live within a stone's throw of some charming little cluster of dwellings for weeks without realizing that there is anything behind the big go-down (storehouse) and the tall trees which overshadow them. I wandered through several complete neighborhoods, each with its barber, bath, furniture shop, butcher, greengrocer, undertaker and candlestick maker. Tokio has certain districts famous for certain things, as Kanda, for books; Asakusa, for eel and prawn restaurants; the Yoshiwara, for courtesans; yet the city is a thousand little communities each sufficient unto itself in regard to these and other necessities or luxuries. One who sets out to walk to any given point in Tokio at night is constantly tempted to deviate as he passes a hundred scented little alleys with a brilliantly lighted geisha house or restaurant shining at the further end or a great golden lantern blocking the path like a sullen moon. And one can go anywhere with more safety than can be found in any other great city in the world. I was thinking of this as I was turning into one of these alleys when a voice said behind me:

"Man go down street."

I swung around quickly, with a shivery feeling of being followed. It was only a Japanese schoolboy in his black visored cap, grinning with pride at being able to demonstrate to his companion that the compulsory English in the schools had not all been wasted on him. Perhaps he could have given a lesson to advantage to the tailor across the street who advertised:

CHARMING AND ECONOMICAL TAILOR

or to the hardware dealer further on whose signboard announced:

HARDWARE DEAR
BEST STEALING
KNIFE.

—Gregory Maso, in *The Metropolitan*.

The Tale of a Sponge

Hooking up sponges in the Bahamas. The water is so clear and shallow that diving for sponges is unnecessary

By Victoria Hayward

THE war has created a great increase in the demand for sponges. The finest and best are needed for hospital use, but far the larger number of the commoner ones are in demand to keep motor trucks, automobiles, gun carriages, etc., in the running against the insidious attacks of Flanders mud; while the sponge in quality between the very fine and the very coarse plays an active part in the "bath" that helps to keep the soldier up to the mark.

Operations in the Eastern Mediterranean greatly interfered with the sponge supply of the Levant and the Ionian archipelago, and many Greeks perforce exchanged the sponge hook for a gun, so that England and France were of necessity compelled to demand greater service of the spongers in the West Indies. Nassau, in the Bahamas, through the great growth of sponges in the shallow waters around the numerous Bahama cays, was in a position to respond at once to this double plea from both France and England. Ever since this demand reached the islands, in the fall of 1914, the Bahaman spongers have been fishing as never before.

Summer and winter, every day of the year, the fleet of sponge boats is at sea. Men and women labor ashore from daylight till dark, and afterward by the light of dim lanterns or by the rays of the tropic moon, assorting and laying out the different varieties of sponge so that the early morning may find them ready for inspection by the merchants. Bay Street resounds from early morning till far into the afternoon with the creak of open-air sponge carts drawn by thin, wiry native horses, loaded to capacity with sponges for the different wholesale drying and baling yards.

A sponge yard in Nassau is a picturesque sight. Overhead the blue sky and warm tropic sun, and on every available spot, indoors and out, and even stacked high on the housetops and in corners of buildings millions of sponges are drying in the sun. Dozens of negresses sit around under the trees or shed roofs, shears in hand, clipping each sponge into a more perfect round, and with a light wooden mallet pounding out every bit of coral that may have found a place in one of the many "canals" of the sponge.

When the sponges are dried, clipped, pounded and sorted they are carried in great hand-made, two-handled baskets the size of a half-puncheon over to the old-fashioned wooden press, which bears a striking resemblance to the guillotine. Here they are compressed into oblong bales and afterward sewed up in sacking, on which the bale's destination, London, Paris or New York, has been previously stamped. Before following the bale on its journey to the hospitals, the garage or the bathroom markets of the world it will be of interest to see what is done with sponge clippings, for no part of the sponge is lost. Every tiny scrap of this most curious of all animal products is turned to some use.

Those pieces that are clipped from wool or silk sponges are baled separately and sold for purposes calling for "small pieces" of sponge—you find them at retail in drug stores; trade takes some for blacking brushes; the desk finds them useful as penwipers; lithographers, etc., cannot do without a small sponge.

Still other coarser kinds are baled for use as "fillers" in making asbestos, for sponge will not burn. The very coarsest of all sponge clippings are put to a peculiar use right in the Bahama Islands. Making use of the property of a sponge to absorb moisture, the Bahamians cart the unsalable clippings off to their fruit groves and dump them around the roots of cocoanut palms, etc., so that in the driest summer weather the sponge stands ready to supply water to the tree.

But the large bales of first-class whole sponges, with "L," "P" or "N Y" marked on the burlap into which they were sewed in some instances by Chinese laborers imported for the purpose, naturally receive the trade's greatest attention. Balancing your own bath sponge in hand, you may judge the great number of sponges contained in a single bale weighing from eighty to a hundred, or a hundred and ten pounds, as some of these bales do. The lighter in weight the bale the finer the quality of the sponge contained therein, as a rule, and so the higher the price. Hence, a bale weighing eighty pounds or even less may be worth at the present time from $250 to $300, whereas one weighing one hundred pounds may not be worth more than $25 or $30.

All the sponges shipped from Nassau come first to New York, even when destined for London or Paris. It is here along our New York waterfront that "L" and "P" sponges are having found for them, as opportunity offers, space in the hold of outgoing tramps or square-riggers at a price as high as $10 per bale for freight.

We have not yet accounted for the many chemical processes which raw sponges must undergo before they may be dispensed to troops and hospitals or given out for any but the crudest use. Pound the negresses ever so well, there are bound to be tiny bits of coral and sand and grits of seaweed left in the sponge reaching New York, London or Paris.

New York, which takes a great many sponges, not alone from Nassau, but from Florida and Cuba and other Caribbean sponge grounds (and, before the war, from the Mediterranean and Greece), is well supplied with both large dealers and fine bleaching plants.

Preparing the natural sponge for market consists in giving it a series of baths. First, a strong solution of oil of vitriol takes out the dirt and sand; then the sponge is plunged into permanganate of potash and hyposulphate of soda to bleach it a pure white. A rinse in sal-soda gives that familiar light yellow shade.

The sponge is then sent with its companions to the hot-air drying room, and in a day or two is ready for packing for reshipment to other American cities. All over the country the automobile and carriage trade finds good sponges an absolute necessity. In fact, there is hardly an American industry in which a sponge is not used.

To fill the increased demand, experiments in the artificial planting and growing of sponges from animal cuttings made under water and attached to concrete disks are being carried out in both the Bahamas and Florida.

Assorted sponges being compressed into bales in the heavy hand-made press

In one of the yards where the sponges are heaped to dry in the sun

Photos by Edith S. Watson

Sponge clippings make excellent blacking brushes or penwipers

The Navy's Great Rifle Ranges

PERHAPS one of the most wonderful records of construction and organization during the present war, and yet the least heard of, has taken place in the building and putting into operation of fifteen navy rifle ranges on land that was one year ago mostly under cultivation and by men who were at that time mostly following peaceful pursuits.

The man who conceived the idea of building this chain of ranges was a man well qualified to realize the necessity and importance of this phase of a soldier's training, a man who has been under fire with the "soldiers of the sea" in many different climes and has had opportunity to observe the results of rifle training and the advantages that men equipped with it have over mere "columns of squad soldiers." This man to whom the credit belongs is Lieutenant Colonel William C. Harllee, of the United States Marine Corps, director of small arms target practice for the United States navy.

The first range that Colonel Harllee built was a thirty-two target range at the Great Lakes Training Station, which is now being worked to full capacity by the recruits at that station. The force of men after completing that range, was transferred to the old Massachusetts State Range at Wakefield. In the meantime other ranges were being acquired, and detachments soon began to leave Wakefield to reconstruct other old ranges or to build new ones. Officers had to be made. Those men who had shown exceptional ability were commissioned and placed in charge of the new ranges; others of ability were made petty officers, and some chief petty officers.—From *The Annapolis Outpost*.

The Obelisk That Will Honor Jeff Davis

AN HISTORICAL monument of peculiar interest to the Southern States is a great obelisk of poured concrete which is being reared on the Christian-Todd county line in Kentucky as a memorial to Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. The shaft, which was begun early in the summer of 1917, will be reared to its full height of 351 feet some time next summer, it is expected. It is the principal feature of a park that includes nineteen acres of the farm on which the Southern leader was born and lived the first three years of his life.

The foundations of the obelisk are 35 feet deep, extending down to solid limestone, and 43 feet square at the surface. Within the base is a room, 18 feet square, from which an elevator shaft leads to an observation room at the top. Portions of three states can be seen from this lofty point.

The monument will contain 6,000 cubic yards of sand, a like amount of crushed stone and 5,000 barrels of cement, while its weight will be more than 13,000 tons. The cost, which is estimated at $150,000, has already been largely met by private contributions from men who were in the Southern army, and others.

The stone used in construction is dug near by, crushed at the base of the monument, fed into a mixer and then elevated to the top, where it is poured into steel forms. In this way four-foot courses are laid, each course requiring two or three days.—From *Popular Mechanics*.

Country Life in Occupied Belgium

THE following extract from a letter received from Wallonia is printed in "The Belgian Bulletin":

"A farmer was ploughing his field in front of his house. A green devil (German policeman) came along and demanded his identification card; first conviction, for not carrying it with him. The farmer crossed the road to go to his house to get it; conviction number two, for having abandoned his horse. The green devil followed the farmer. The housewife was cooking new potatoes, unauthorized before September 15; conviction number three; the chickens in the yard were pecking rye, a serious offence; conviction number four.

"And all that in less than five minutes."

Speaking of Substitutes

THE list of substitutes for everything imaginable in the invaded territory of Belgium grows longer every day. It now includes "coffee" from pulverized and roasted horse chestnuts, as well as "flour" from the powdered pith of elder trees.—From *The Belgian Bulletin*.

Twine—Miles of It

—*Press Illustrating Service.*

HOBBIES are probably an index to the lighter of humanity's suppressed desires; long hidden wants they are, perhaps, running back to some primitive need. Some persons save bird's eggs, oyster shells; some climb trees for a hobby; others wear patches on their trousers. Wrist watches are doubtless a hobby with some persons instead of a habit of fashion. The difference between a hobby and a habit is that one springs out of attention and the other out of a lack of attention.

At any rate, here is a man who makes a hobby of gathering pieces of string, like a bird preparing to line a nest. Oscar Fischer, who is a mail carrier, has gone around Cincinnati for years trailing small bits of twine. There are folks who pick up pins. Mr. Fischer spurns them. Only string answers that inward want which he found gnawing at his consciousness when he first became a postman. Letters that are tied in bundles, packages that are unwrapped in postal stations—all have contributed to Mr. Fischer's enjoyment of the world. His collection now weighs 67 pounds, has a 23-inch waist line, and if it were unravelled would stretch in a straight line five miles long. The owner of it wants to know if there is any collector anywhere in the world that has a larger prize to show for his efforts.

Letters in Khaki

HERE is another colorful document from the fighting front The letters from which the following excerpts were taken, came from Murray H. Grother, a sergeant in the 302d T. M. B. (Trench Motor Battery), to his brother in New York City:

"Dear Abe:

"You say you have been looking for a letter from me. I can only say that I have been writing to you regularly, but sometimes, of course, a little time elapses before I get the chance. . . .

"You have no doubt by this time received my letter telling you that I got those cigarettes. I have not as yet, however, received . . . the cigars you sent me. I was stuck for a smoke for the past two weeks, and did the best I could between a pipe and rolling Bull Durham cigarettes, but didn't get much enjoyment out of them. Yesterday one of our officers (a very fine fellow) went out and came back with a box of fifty cigars and asked me if I wanted them. He knows I am a heavy cigar smoker, and he brought them back for me. Well, you can imagine how grateful I was to him. First cigars in two weeks, and it sure does make me feel different. . . .

"Of course, we heard of Quentin Roosevelt's death, and we were all sorry to hear it, too. The spirit displayed by his father certainly is wonderful, and only goes to show that we are not fighting this war for ourselves only, but for the protection of those who are to come after us, and the sacrifice made now, no matter how great, is a just one, in order to secure for the generations to come 'liberty for all.' That is the spirit every one at home should be in, for what is the loss of one life or a number of lives in comparison to having one barbarous nation rule the world? It must be stopped, and it will be stopped at any cost. Let every one at home do his bit the best way he can, and we will do the rest right here."

In a later letter he writes:

"You know that new song you folks are singing back home—

"'If he can fight like he can love,
Then it's goodby Germany.'

Well, you know, old top, we fellows are some lovers, so it looks like 'Goodby Germany.'

"Say, Abe, if you only knew some of the nasty, dirty, rotten, foul means by which they are trying to win this war you would smash every Dutchman you saw just for luck. . . .

"I wish I could tell you a few of the things they tried to put over on us, but we beat them to it. Long ago they came to the conclusion that they couldn't beat us in a fair way; now I am sure they are already making up their minds that they can't beat us in an unfair way, either.

"I don't think I ever wrote you the grand message General Pershing sent to all his men. Here it is:

"'Hardship will be your lot, but trust in God will give you comfort; temptation will befall you, but the teachings of our Saviour will give you strength. Let your valor as a soldier and your conduct as a man be an inspiration to your comrades and an honor to your country.'

"Isn't that fine?

"Love to everybody.

"Your brother, MURRAY."

The Job Fits the Man

THE store in the great room of the Morgan Memorial deals in ice chests and Venuses, hats and frying pans, shoes and violins. The Morgan Memorial is a hard thing to define; but in "The World Outlook" Phyllis Duganne writes of it in part:

"It may be called a church or a school or a settlement. Then, besides, it is a factory and a department store. You can learn there to upholster chairs or you can take piano lessons; you can become a milliner, or you can study domestic science. You can make over shoes, or yourself. You can locate a job through its employment bureau, or you can consult its own doctor or lawyer.

"An entire city block in the South End of Boston is taken up by its four buildings—the six-story Industries Building, the Seavey Settlement, the Children's Mission and the church, a lovely Gothic structure and the newest of the buildings.

"The South End of Boston—in case that gives you no picture, let me explain that there is no part of the city which has, and has deservedly, a worse reputation than this district.

"There was a little Methodist church here in the days when it was a clean-streeted residential district, but as the neighborhood gradually deteriorated the congregation began to move away. The quaint little street which shoots off from the church had hardly a building which was not a house of prostitution. The sidewalks became crowded with people, ill kempt and undernourished, with only money enough to fill cash registers in the saloons.

"The congregation at the church dwindled to a mere handful, who urged the pastor to move uptown. It was the ever increasing problem of the downtown church. Edgar A. Helms faced the question squarely. The district had never held so many people, for private houses which had lodged only five or six people had become congested rooming houses or tenements. And rarely has there been people more in need of a church.

"Dr. Helms decided to stay at his post.

"He worked methodically; the whole institution has been built upward, department after department, like brick after brick in a wall. First of all, of course, he tried to have the police clean up the district, but they laughed at him. Then one day he went to the district police captain, looking very determined and a little amused. In the vernacular of the neighborhood he had 'got something on' the officer. He gave him his choice of losing his job or cleaning up the district.

"The district was overhauled.

"Then Dr. Helms saw around him men and women kept from self-respecting work by drink or drugs. He made their problem his. Dr. Helms is preëminently practical. His 'scientific reconstruction of bums' is not based on mere emotion. It is the result of study. It uses the most modern methods. Not only is there a mission to save men, but also a job at the Memorial Industries and a home at the Settlement to keep them saved. Their physical welfare is in charge of a medical expert. Their mental state is looked after by a psychologist who tries to fit every man with a job.